



RETHINKING THE METRE OF *PARZIVAL*: IAMBIC VERSE FOR A
TROCHAIC LANGUAGEBy JOSHUA J. BOOTH 
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ABSTRACT

The Middle High German (MHG) prosodic foot is uncontroversially considered to be trochaic, a fact which has traditionally led scholars to assume a preference for trochaic metre in poetry of the MHG Classical Period. However, given the trend elsewhere in mediaeval Europe (even in trochaic languages) to emulate French lyrics and compose verse in iambic metre, the uncritical assumption of a trochaic metre in all MHG poetry seems inadequate. A close examination of *Parzival*, an early thirteenth-century grail romance by Wolfram von Eschenbach, suggests that the traditional analysis is not only insufficient but counter to the linguistic evidence. This paper argues for the first time that *Parzival* was in fact composed in iambic tetrameter, based on a close analysis of the rhythmic alternations within lines and the quantity and foot structure of line-final syllables. Halle & Keyser's (1966) principles for iambic metre were used to produce a taxonomy of possible line structures in *Parzival* and the dominance of the *wswsws* pattern, beginning on a weak beat and ending on a strong, offers convincing evidence in favour of iambic metre. The remaining lines can be neatly categorised as iambic by allowing feminine rhyme (with an extrametrical schwa syllable) or the construction of monosyllabic feet from a single heavy syllable. This analysis is further corroborated by the consistently iambic structure of line-final feet, as well as the foot structures avoided by the poet, identified according to the weight of the final, penultimate and antepenultimate syllables. The present analysis has the advantage of explaining the various patterns of alternating prominence in the metre of *Parzival* much more consistently than the complex system advocated by the traditional literary view.

Der prosodische Fuß war im Mittelhochdeutschen ohne Zweifel trochäisch, was zur allgemeinen Vermutung in der traditionellen Forschung geführt hat, dass die Dichter des mittelhochdeutschen „höfischen“ Zeitabschnitts ausschließlich einen trochäischen Vers eingesetzt haben. Aufgrund der Tendenz anderswo im mittelalterlichen Europa (wie zum Beispiel in England) Versdichtung im jambischen Metrum zu verfassen, sollte diese Vermutung jedoch kritisch hinterfragt werden. Wenn man *Parzival*, einen Versroman Wolframs von Eschenbach aus den ersten Jahren des 13. Jahrhunderts, genauer untersucht, ist festzustellen, dass die traditionelle Analyse nicht nur unangemessen, sondern auch im Widerspruch zu linguistischen Daten steht. Gestützt auf eine gründliche Analyse der Fußstruktur und des Silbengewichtes der Reimwörter sowie des rhythmischen Wechsels innerhalb der Verszeilen wird in diesem Aufsatz zum ersten Mal behauptet, dass *Parzival* tatsächlich im jambischen Metrum verfasst wurde. Eine Taxonomie der möglichen metrischen Zeilenstrukturen in *Parzival* wird basierend auf Halle & Keyser's (1966) Prinzipien für das jambische Metrum erstellt. Einen überzeugenden Beweis für ein jambisches Metrum findet man im häufigen Vorkommen der

Struktur , die mit einer Senkung beginnt und einer Hebung endet. Die übrigen Zeilen lassen sich leicht als jambisch kategorisieren, indem man weibliche Reime (wobei eine extrametrische Schwa-Silbe dem letzten Versfuß einer Zeile folgt) sowie den Aufbau einsilbiger Versfüße aus einer einzigen schweren Silbe erlaubt. Weitere Unterstützung dieser Analyse findet man sowohl in der konsequent jambischen Struktur des finalen Fußes der Zeile als auch in den Fußstrukturen, die Wolfram am Zeilenende vermeidet. Der größte Vorteil der vorliegenden Analyse liegt darin, dass die verschiedenen Muster wechselnder Hebungen und Senkungen im Metrum von *Parzival* sich dabei viel ökonomischer erklären lassen als bei dem komplexen System, das durch die traditionelle literaturwissenschaftliche Darstellung erforderlich ist.

[German]

1. INTRODUCTION

The Middle High German (MHG)¹ foot, in continuity with Old High German (OHG) and Modern German (NHG), is generally considered to be weight-sensitive and trochaic.² This has led scholars to assume a preference for trochaic metre in poetry of the mediaeval period. Courtly epics and romances of the MHG Classical Period (c.1170–1230) are traditionally considered to be composed in rhyming VIERTAKTER couplets. Vennemann (1995: 200f.) defines the Viertakter as a sequence of four TAKTE³ ('measures'), preceded by an optional anacrusis comprising one or more unstressed syllables. Each of the first three *Takte* comprises a minimal (bimoraic) foot or 'parasitic' foot (an unstressed light or schwa syllable which never bears stress in natural speech but is obliged to form a stressed foot for the purposes of poetic metre) to which a further light syllable can optionally be added to form an 'expanded' (disyllabic) foot. The fourth measure, often referred to as the 'CADENCE', comprises an unexpanded bimoraic or parasitic foot and, in the case of feminine rhymes, can be followed by a final light syllable. The cadence contains the rhyming syllables, unless it is a parasitic foot (in which case the penultimate foot contains the rhyming syllable). The literature relies on a broad taxonomy of possible rhyme structures and the *Viertakter* analysis is critically reviewed in Section 3.1. An example of this analysis (including a final parasitic foot) is given in Figure 1, with the dotted lines representing an analysis including the cadence as a separate constituent (adapted from Vennemann 1995):

This paper provides a close examination of the metre of the poem *Parzival* and demonstrates that the traditional *Viertakter* analysis is unsupported by the linguistic evidence. It is argued that *Parzival* is in fact written in an iambic metre, specifically iambic tetrameter. *Parzival* is an Arthurian grail romance of around 25,000 lines, composed by Wolfram von Eschenbach in the first decade of the thirteenth century in East Franconian (Efr) dialect (a transitional Upper German dialect which shares a number of features with

¹ I would like to thank Aditi Lahiri for her invaluable support, advice and feedback. My thanks also go to Wolfgang de Melo, Holly Kennard and the anonymous reviewers who provided much-appreciated comments on previous drafts of this article. Any remaining errors are my own. In this paper, the following abbreviations are used: Classical Middle High German = Cl-MHG; Efr = East Franconian; Common Germanic = Gmc; Middle English = ME; Middle High German = MHG; Modern High German = NHG; Middle Dutch = MNL; Old French = OF; Old High German = OHG; Open Syllable Lengthening = OSL.

² This term is borrowed from musical terminology and is essentially referring to a poetic foot.

³ OF poetry of the period is usually considered to lack alternating rhythm and the binary structure found in Germanic iambic verse, composed instead in octosyllabic rhyming couplets. However, see Noyer (2002) for a data-driven analysis of OF verse, which identifies a pervasive underlying iambic structure to these octosyllables. This iambic pattern appears to have been extremely consistent in earlier verse but underwent a gradual decline through the course of the twelfth century.

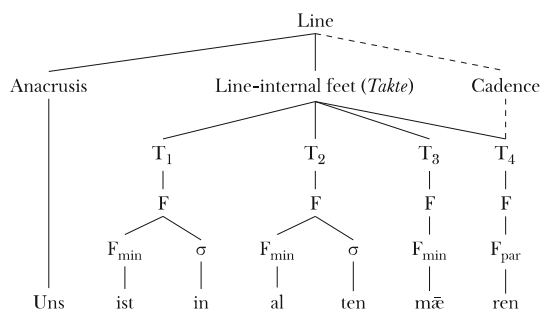


FIGURE 1. An example parsing of a line in *Viertakter*: ‘We are [told] in old tales’.

East Central German). The poem is a reworking and adaptation of Chrétien de Troyes’s late twelfth-century unfinished work in Old French (OF), *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal*. The use of iambic pentameter parallels developments elsewhere in the Germanic linguistic area, where a number of poets of the period, particularly those writing in Middle English (ME) and Middle Dutch (MNL), developed a preference for iambic metre, as can be seen in the work of Chaucer (cf. Halle & Keyser 1966) and the poems *Lutgart* (cf. Fikkert 2000) and *Saladijn* (cf. Lahiri & Sytsema 2018). The prestige of French and Low German courtly culture is most likely the driving force behind Wolfram von Eschenbach’s use of iambic metre in his composition of *Parzival* (for a discussion of French prestige and its influence on MHG poetry, see Section 2.2). Given the popularity of French romances in the High German courts, Wolfram’s (albeit apparently incomplete) mastery of French and the trend elsewhere in Europe (even in cultures writing in trochaic languages) to emulate French lyrics and compose verse in iambic metre, it seems inadequate unquestioningly to assume a trochaic metre in poems of the Classical Period.⁴ The dominance in *Parzival* of the pattern *wswswsws*, beginning on a weak beat and ending on a strong, offers convincing evidence of iambic metre, as well as the large number of heavy and superheavy syllables terminating lines, the vast majority of which are immediately preceded by an unstressed syllable containing a schwa.

This claim is supported by a close analysis of a selection of 450 lines of the poem, which suggests that, rather than requiring the additional machinery traditionally employed to account for classical MHG metre in literary studies, a simple iambic reading is perfectly adequate; any apparent irregularities simply arise from the difficulties associated with attempting to write iambic verse in a trochaic language. This paper takes a quantitative approach, identifying five key line structures in Section 3.1 and demonstrating that the variation in the poem’s metre can be much more neatly accounted for by simply constructing iambic feet from left to right, allowing for monosyllabic feet and feminine rhyme (rhymes followed by a final extrametrical schwa syllable). This eliminates a great deal of the complexities required by a *Viertakter* analysis and better reflects the distribution of line structures in the poem. The quantity of line-final syllables is considered in Section 3.2. A trochaic analysis would expect most final syllables to be light; however, the majority of lines begin with a light syllable and end with a stress-attracting heavy or superheavy syllable, making it difficult to motivate a trochaic analysis.

Following the analysis of *Parzival*’s metre and the quantity of line-final syllables, the prosodic structure of line-final rhyming feet is considered, drawing on a larger sample of the text (2160 lines) and providing further evidence in favour of an iambic analysis. If Wolfram chose to compose verse in iambic metre, ideally terminating lines with a final stressed rhyming syllable, he

⁴ Although see also Witte (1927), who argues for an Alemannic provenance, based largely on a small number of {tt} spellings for /t/.

would quickly have come into conflict with the largely initial stress of MHG, where monomorphemic native words were rarely more than one (trochaic) foot long. The way in which he approaches this conflict is revealing, not only in terms of the poet's sensitivity to quantity and stress, but also in relation to the structure of the prosodic foot in MHG. Wolfram's choice of iambic metre resulted in a preference for line-final monosyllables, feminine rhymes and Romance loan words, but a complete avoidance of words of the structure ($\check{\sigma}\bar{\sigma}$).

In discussion of the poem's scansion, the following notation is used throughout: x represents a weak position and $/$ a strong position, with $|$ separating (poetic) feet. Similarly, $\check{\sigma}$ denotes a light syllable, $\bar{\sigma}$ a heavy syllable and $\bar{\bar{\sigma}}$ a superheavy syllable. Elided syllables are underlined. No original manuscript of *Parzival* remains, so MS *St. Gallen, Stiftsbibliothek, Cod. 857* (Cod. 857) formed the basis of this study. Otherwise known as MS D in *Parzival* literature, Cod. 857 forms the basis of Lachmann's edition of *Parzival* ([c.1210]/1981) and is one of the earliest extant non-fragmentary copies of the poem. This MS was selected due to its Upper German origin, most likely copied in the South-West Bavarian dialect area (cf. Hoffmann 2000),⁵ and relative proximity in time to the original composition of *Parzival* (being likely less than 50 years younger). Quotes are taken from Cod. 857, rather than Lachmann's edition, which alters the text to better conform to the *Viertakter*.⁶ However, as vowel length is often unmarked in MHG manuscripts, length marks ($:$) are placed after long vowels for the reader's convenience.

The structure of this paper is as follows: Section 2 outlines the linguistic and cultural context relevant to a discussion of *Parzival*'s metre. A brief overview of syllable weight, quantity sensitivity and lexical stress in MHG is given in Section 2.1, with Section 2.2 providing a general discussion of *Parzival*'s oral performance and the influence of French courtly culture and poetic form in the period. Section 3.1 reviews the traditional approach to MHG metre and argues that an iambic analysis is perfectly adequate to account for the patterns of alternation observed in the metre of *Parzival*. Section 3.2 considers the quantity of line-final syllables, which are invariably heavy or superheavy (unless they represent the final extrametrical syllable of a feminine rhyme). Section 4 provides additional evidence for an iambic analysis, considering the foot structure of line-final words. Concluding remarks are provided in Section 5.

2. THE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL CONTEXT OF *PARZIVAL*

2.1. *Quantity and stress in Middle High German*

As this paper focuses on prosodic structure and makes extensive reference to the weight of syllables and the construction of feet, it is useful first to provide a brief overview of the relevant aspects of quantity and lexical stress in MHG (the precise structure of the foot in MHG will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4.1). The synchronic stage of MHG of interest to this paper, specifically the EFr dialect spoken by Wolfram around the turn of the thirteenth century, maintained a contrast in both vowel and consonant quantity and appears to have predated both open syllable lengthening (OSL) and later degemination. OSL was a general process common to all West Germanic languages which lengthened all vowels in stressed open syllables. It is one of several sound changes defining Early Modern German but had its origins in the MHG period, active during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries

⁵ Given the fact that *Parzival* appears to have been composed instead in iambic tetrameter, this is problematic (not least because this edition forms the basis of most modern *Parzival* scholarship).

⁶ Heavy and superheavy syllables are not differentiated in de Boor & Wisniewski's terminology (which only refers to 'long' and 'short' syllables), but this distinction is made throughout this paper. Consonant extrametricality is not a feature of MHG and monosyllabic words are only possible if the syllable is either heavy or superheavy, due to the language's bimoraic minimal word constraint.

Superheavy		Heavy		Light	
VVC] ₀	<i>dāh.te</i> / <i>guot</i> ‘think 3SG.PRET’ ‘good’	VV] ₀	<i>sē.wes</i> / <i>bî</i> ‘lake GEN’ ‘by, with’	V] ₀	<i>le.ben</i> / <i>kû.nec</i> ‘live INF’ ‘king’
VCC] ₀	<i>worh.te</i> / <i>hant</i> ‘work 3SG.PRET’ ‘hand’	VC] ₀	<i>waz.zer</i> / <i>spil</i> ‘water’ ‘game’		

FIGURE 2. Syllable weight in MHG (adapted from de Boor & Wisniewski 1965).⁷

(cf. Paul 2007: 81 ff.; Lahiri & Elan Dresher 1999). In this period, therefore, geminate consonants (orthographically doubled) were still genuinely long and stressed initial light syllables were still possible. Syllable weight can thus be defined as in Figure 2:

Only full vowels could occur in stressed syllables in MHG and all of the plain monophthongs could be long or short: /a,e,ɛ,⁸i,o,u/ ⁹⟨a,e,i,o,u⟩ vs. /a:ɛ:i:ɔ:u:/ ⟨â,ê,î,ô,û⟩. So too could the umlauts: /æ,ø,y/ ⟨ä,ö,ü⟩ vs. /æ:i:ø:i:y:/ ⟨æ,œ,iu⟩. In contrast, diphthongs were always bimoraic and patterned with long vowels (there were no short diphthongs): /ei,iə,ou,øy,yə,uə/ ⟨ei,ie,ou,ö u,üe,uo⟩. The orthographic representation of the various vowels provided here follows the conventions of standardised ‘Classical Middle High German’ (Cl-MHG), but there is substantial variation in the written record, as the examples in this paper demonstrate.¹⁰ Schwa could only occur in unstressed syllables and is represented by ⟨e⟩ in manuscripts. In this paper, the term ‘schwa syllable’ refers to such syllables, including ⟨-en, -el, -er⟩.

Like all Germanic languages, German has retained trochaic feet ever since stress first settled on the root syllable in prehistoric Germanic (Gmc). Comparative evidence demonstrates that these trochees were unambiguously quantity-sensitive in Common Gmc and the East, West and North Gmc dialects of the early period. OHG thus retained initial stress, trochaic feet and quantity sensitivity, in contrast to the right edge stress of NHG. Most MHG grammars (cf. de Boor & Wisniewski 1965; Mettke 1983; Paul 2007) suggest that this situation continued into MHG, with the following exceptions to initial stress: unstressed prefixes, such as *be-*, *en-*, *ge-* and *zer-* (including nominal forms derived from prefixed verbs, such as *durchliuhtec* ‘radiant’); separable verbs, where—beginning with the *höfische Dichtersprache*¹¹—the separable particle before the verb would not carry main stress; verbal compounds (producing contrasts between words such as *widerrede* ‘contradiction’ and *widerreden* ‘contradict’); and Romance loan words, which are generally considered to maintain the right-edge stress of the donor language.

Foot structure is largely neglected in the MHG grammars; however, I have argued that the accommodation of Romance loans into the native system (as simplex words) led to the adjustment of certain metrical parameters during the MHG period (Booth 2020). Foot structure was thus inherited intact from Gmc (via OHG), but the direction of parsing had changed, starting at the right edge rather than the left. These changes will not have greatly affected most native vocabulary, which was almost exclusively mono- or disyllabic and rarely comprised more than a single foot. However, it aided the accommodation of non-native vocabulary with right-edge stress. It is often assumed that such loans were not of sufficient number to cause any lasting

⁷ There was a distinction between three short *e*-phonemes in MHG, /e,ɛ,æ/ ⟨e,ɛ,ä⟩, but this distinction was not maintained in all dialects and all three have fallen together in NHG. The distinction between /e/ and /ɛ/ need not concern us here, as it is not relevant to the analysis.

⁸ The short vowels were likely more open than the long vowels, as in the NHG tense-lax distinction between short and long vowels. However, the precise nature of these vowels is unclear from the written record, so for the sake of clarity, the IPA transcriptions used in this paper simply use the same symbols as for the corresponding long vowels.

⁹ Scribal orthography differs from the conventions of standardised editions of MHG texts in many respects; of particular importance for this paper is the use of various diacritics in the representation of certain VV phonemes. The relevant graphemes for the examples appearing in this paper are ⟨v̇,ö,ŷ,î⟩, representing /øy, ou,ua,u:w,y:/ respectively (Cl-MHG ⟨ou,ou,uo,ûw,iu⟩).

¹⁰ ‘Courtly poetic language’.

¹¹ In contrast to early OHG, which nativised the stress of Romance loans: *Kôln* < Lat. *Colônia*.

change to the native stress system before the fifteenth century (and beyond), with Wells referring to them as mere ‘stylish enhancements’, restricted to poetry and a courtly sociolect (2005: 1403 f.). This is surprising; as Vennemann (1995) notes, the shift of stress in simplex words from the initial syllable to the end of the word had already begun in the middle period, most notably in OF loans ending in *-ieren* and *-îe* (NHG *-ieren* [-i:ɐn, -i:ɐn] and *-ei* [-ai]). The right-edge stress of Romance loans is of particular importance in Section 4.2. The precise structure of the foot in MHG will be discussed in greater detail in Section 4 (for a comprehensive, diachronic overview of Gmc stress, see Lahiri et al. 1999).

2.2. Literary models and the performance of *Parzival*

Verse romances, such as *Parzival*, were not sung, but instead read aloud or recited by a performer (either the poets themselves or a literate *clericus*, cf. Green 1994: 191). This is in contrast to the MINNELIEDER (‘minnesongs’ or ‘love songs’), lyric poems which were sung and set to music; this was possibly also true of heroic epics, such as the *Nibelungenlied* (Jones & Jones 2019: 303). Romances were read aloud for the entertainment of lay aristocratic courts, an audience including both literate and non-literate auditors. Although Wolfram (or rather his narrator persona) claimed illiteracy, this is rarely taken at face value in modern scholarship. Instead, this claim can be regarded as a signal of identity, belonging to contemporary lay knightly culture and distinct from the court clerics and those knights who had received a clerical education in Latin (cf. Green 1994: 292; Curschmann 1984: 235). Regardless of Wolfram’s supposed analphabetism, it is certain from references within the text that *Parzival* existed in a written form and in a culture where such texts were expected to be both read aloud and circulated for private reading by individuals, particularly noble women, who enjoyed a higher rate of literacy (cf. Green 1994: 192).¹²

The developing courtly culture of the secular German nobility looked to France for its models, and literature of the twelfth century was dominated by French influence (cf. Hirsch 1883: 163; Bumke 1991: 88). By the end of the thirteenth century, there were over forty German romances based on OF sources and much of the popularity of such literature stems from its portrayal of the social and material culture of the French courts (Bumke 1991: 100). Of all OF poets, Chrétien de Troyes was the most influential in the German courts, with four of his five romances adapted into German: Hartmann von Aue’s *Erec* and *Iwein*, Wolfram’s *Parzival* and Konrad Fleck’s (now lost) translation of *Cligés* (followed by a subsequent version by Ulrich von Tûrheim which survives in fragments). Only Chrétien’s *Le chevalier de la charrete* was not translated (possibly due to its adulterous themes, cf. Bumke 1991: 94).

Heroic epics, *Minnelieder* and other forms of vernacular poetry originated before the age of courtly romances and were based on ‘indigenous traditions’, but romance as a genre was fundamentally shaped by the imitation and adaptation of OF models (Bumke 1991: 88; Rasmussen 2000: 183 f.). There is substantial evidence that this French influence extended beyond MHG poets’ choice of subject matter and lexis, also shaping poetic form and structure. For instance, the majority of the work of late twelfth-century *Minnesänger* were ‘characterised by a strict thematic and formal adherence to their French models’ (Bumke 1991: 96). Like Wolfram, these poets followed strict principles of line structure and avoided the older indigenous use of assonance in favour of the pure rhymes which characterised OF poetry. Many *Minnesänger* borrowed strophic structures and rhyme schemes directly (in so-

¹² Heinrich von Veldeke explicitly states in his *Eneide* that he lent the countess of Cleves the incomplete MS to read (which was subsequently stolen) and Wolfram directly addresses ladies on several occasions (e.g. in his ‘apology’ and at the close of Book VI). He even hints in the poem’s final couplet that *Parzival* was commissioned by a noble lady: *ist daz dvrch ein wip gesehn / div mîz mir sv̄zer worte iehN*. (‘if this [i.e. his telling of the full tale] has happened for the sake of a woman, / she might avow that I spoke sweet words.’).

called CONTRAFACIA) and 'with the rapid growth of intercourse with France and Provence foreign forms were introduced in great variety' (Waterhouse 1959: 28).

This was no less true of metrical structure, where the rhyming couplets used by the MHG poets were intended as an approximation of OF octosyllabic verse (Waterhouse 1959: 17). Indeed, the French octosyllable appears to have been ultimately responsible for the development of iambic metre in Germanic poetic traditions, despite their native trochaic stress patterns. As Tarlinskaja notes, 'poets frequently choose a form that is not optimal for the language givens' (2006: 64), often driven by extralinguistic factors, such as cultural prestige. She provides a more modern parallel to the situation in MHG, where Czech poets followed a German iambic pattern. Here, they were driven by the prestige of this foreign model, even though the iamb is sub-optimal given the prosodic facts of Czech (where stress is word-initial). Furthermore, 'even in French syllabic verse there is a vague "iambic" cadence, felt in particular by non-native speakers of French used to syllabo-tonic verse' (Tarlinskaja 2006: 56; see also Noyer 2002). Certainly, poets were sufficiently conscious of these abstract structures to parody them, as in Chaucer's *Sir Thopas*, which mimics the three or four-stress lines of earlier ME verse romances (cf. Stanley 2003).

In the context of ME, Russom (2017) argues that iambic metre developed as a compromise between the characteristically short Germanic vocabulary and longer Romance loan words with right-edge stress. The metre was thus abstracted from the iambic prosodic pattern of such loans, but was crucially also compatible with the native language, where the old inflexional endings had been replaced by periphrastic constructions involving weak function words, such as articles and prepositions. This resulted in 'iambic' (š6) sequences of unstressed (reduced) function words followed by initially-stressed content words (Russom 2017: 260).¹³ Iambic metre thus offered the opportunity to incorporate large quantities of prestigious loans and approximate OF octosyllabic or decasyllabic verse whilst remaining compatible with native vocabulary, directly paralleling the situation in MHG. Interestingly, as will be seen in Section 3, Wolfram's work furthermore parallels *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, insofar as the *Gawain* poet 'placed iambic words with conspicuous frequency at the end of the line and placed trochaic words toward the beginning of the line with equally conspicuous frequency' (Russom 2017: 270 f.), drawing on the principle of closure (whereby poets adhere most strictly to metrical principles at the end of a line).

3. THE METRE OF *PARZIVAL*

3.1. *Patterns of alternating stress*

Traditionally, literary scholarship on MHG verse assumes a trochaic metre in verse of the MHG Classical Period and, whilst no rule book existed of the kind we find in Opitz's later treatise on German poetics, *Buch von der Deutschen Poeterey* ([1624]/1966), there exists a set of received conventions, based on the behaviour and practices of the poets of the period.¹⁴ The details of this system are intricate and complex, assuming a line-internal structure comprising an optional anacrusis, three trochaic feet and a cadence (containing the rhyming syllables), along with a repertoire of various permissible foot structures for the rhyme and additional machinery to account for the apparent variation observed in the metre. One of the most troubling aspects of this approach is that it frequently obliges a schwa syllable, which can never carry stress in speech, to bear stress for the sake of the metre, as can be seen in the following taxonomy of rhyme structures (Table 1):

¹³ Russom (2017: 260) provides the example of Beowulf 1507a, *hringa / þéngel* (/ x l / x), which would have become the *lórd / of rings* (x / l x /).

¹⁴ See Jones & Jones (2019) for a comprehensive overview of this literary account of the conventions of the Classical Period (c. 1170–1230).

(1) Examples from *Parzival* rhyming on the same word, *mære*: (a) 1.652,14 and (b) 1.317,21.

- Although stress deviating from natural language is occasionally found in English folk songs and nursery rhymes, this phenomenon is peculiar to sung or chanted (i.e. musical) verse, distinct from written or spoken poetry (or ‘art verse’, cf. Hayes & Kaun 1996; Hayes & MacEachern 1998), and results from predictable rules of musical ‘textsetting’ (Halle & Lerdahl 1993; Hayes 2009). In these musical, highly rhythmic performance styles, lines comprise a consistent number of isochronous measures, occasionally obliging the mapping of unstressed or reduced syllables onto strong positions (i.e. in lines which contain fewer syllables than the abstract musical structure requires), even when this is at odds with natural language prominence and poetic metre.¹⁵ However, this does not apply to verse romances such as *Parzival*, which were neither sung nor set to music (being instead recited or privately

¹⁵ Hayes's approach does not distinguish between metre and music, but Kiparsky (2006) argues that musical rhythm represents its own tier of rhythmic structure, autonomous from those of linguistic prominence and metre, all of which are subject to their own constraints (cf. Kiparsky 2006: 7; see also Fabb & Halle 2008). 'Short' lines, such as (1a), comprise only three metrical feet; if the principles of sung verse were applied to (1a) (and it were not recited or read, as was in fact the case), the final syllable of the feminine rhyme might conceivably be mapped onto a strong *rhythmic* position (otherwise empty due to the lack of a fourth metrical foot). This is illustrated below (the iambic metre proposed in this paper is provided below the line and a potential musical rhythm above it, represented by an abstract grid adapted from Hayes 2009):

	x			x			x			x
x	x	x		x	x		x	x		x
x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
/gə.	'nus.	sən		'dir.	rə		'mæ:			rə
x	/	x		/	x		/			[x]

This pattern is crucially always optional, reflecting the autonomy of musical rhythm, metre and linguistic prominence. The line to *fétch a pail of wáter* (from *Jack and Jill*) can be realised with stress on the final syllable (*ǝf wá l — tər*) but—even when set to music, as in *Mother Goose* (Elliott 1873: 2)—this syllable commonly occupies an unstressed position, followed by a rest (*ǝf wá l tər 0*). Such reduced syllables essentially fall on ‘beat 3 ½’ (Kiparsky 2006: 11), preceding an empty final strong position. As Blumenfeld (2015: 92) notes, unlike written verse (where the ‘covert’ metre must be recovered by the reader), ‘practically any sequence of words of reasonable length is metrical in sung verse, in the sense that it can be parsed by the template. Thus, sung verse typically has looser meters than written verse’.

TABLE 1. The traditional taxonomy of rhyme structures in MHG poetry of the Classical period.

Masculine monosyllabic	Single σ or $\bar{\sigma}$
Masculine disyllabic	Stressed σ followed by an unstressed σ or $\bar{\sigma}$
Feminine	Stressed $\bar{\sigma}$ followed by an unstressed σ or $\bar{\sigma}$
<i>Klingend</i> disyllabic	A single $\bar{\sigma}$ in the penultimate foot with the final foot formed by a single $\bar{\sigma}$ or σ which does not bear stress in speech but bears secondary stress for metre.
<i>Klingend</i> trisyllabic	Stressed σ followed by an unstressed σ in the penultimate foot with the final foot formed by a single $\bar{\sigma}$ or σ which does not bear stress in speech but bears secondary stress for metre.

read). In such verse, metrically shorter lines were perfectly acceptable; variations in line length were used to provide emphasis or serve aesthetic purposes, playing with expectations and adding interest by breaking the potentially monotonous rhythm of four-stress lines.

It will be argued here that *Parzival*, despite the assumption of most scholars, is in fact composed in an iambic metre, drawing on evidence from line scansion and syllable weight in the antepenultimate, penultimate and final syllables. As Zonneveld notes, ‘what makes a poem iambic is not so much that it can be recited in the usual “thumping” fashion (da-DUM da-DUM da-DUM . . .), but rather that it shows a number of formal features which define it as such’ (2000a: 34). These features constitute the ‘abstract pattern that is satisfied by particular arrangements of linguistic givens’ referred to by Halle & Keyser (1966: 191). In categorising this pattern, they constructed a set of principles defining iambic pentameter for their analysis of Chaucer (Halle & Keyser 1966: 197). Given the fact that *Parzival* constructs lines with four strong beats (i.e. iambic tetrameter rather than pentameter), these principles require adjustment, following the adaptations suggested for analysis of the MNL poems *Lutgart* (Fikkert 2000; Zonneveld 2000b) and *Saladīn* (Lahiri & Sytsema 2018). Rather than ten, lines should ideally comprise eight positions in the order $x / x / x / x /$, with the possibility of up to two extrametrical syllables:

- (2) Principles for iambic tetrameter (adapted from Halle & Keyser 1966: 197).
- a.

Principle I

The iambic tetrameter verse consists of eight positions to which may be appended one or two extrametrical syllables.
- b.

Principle II

A position is normally occupied by a single syllable, but under certain conditions, it may be occupied by more than one syllable or none.

Condition 1. Two vowels may constitute a single position, provided that they adjoin or are separated by a liquid or coronal consonant or by a word-boundary, which may be followed by *h*-, and provided that one of them is a weakly stressed or unstressed vowel.

Condition 2. An unstressed or weakly stressed monosyllabic word may constitute a single metrical position with a preceding stressed or unstressed syllable.
- c.

Principle III

A stress maximum is constituted by a syllable bearing linguistically determined stress that is greater than that of the two syllables adjacent to it in the same verse. A stress maximum may only occupy even positions within a verse, but not every even position need be so occupied.

Example (3a) therefore represents the ideal line structure. To this an extrametrical syllable may be added, either line-finally, creating a feminine rhyme, as in (3b), or at the beginning of the line, resulting in an initial sequence of two weak beats, as in (3c). However, line-initial sequences of two weak syllables more commonly result in elision, as in (3d). Lines should therefore contain a minimum of eight and maximum of ten syllables, although in practice lines rarely exceed nine, as in (3b). However, as will be seen, in the context of *Parzival*, this is not always the case; Wolfram is

comfortable with deviating from this principle and includes infrequent lines in iambic trimeter or pentameter, such as (3e) and (3f) respectively, as well as allowing a single stressed heavy syllable to occupy an entire foot, demonstrated by (3g), which is only five syllables long. This is in keeping with Principle II, which also permits the elision of schwa in lines such as (3f) and (3h) (through Condition 1, cf. Fikkert 2000: 308 f.). In addition to these principles, ‘lines with “inverted first feet” are perfectly regular in iambic verse’ (Halle & Keyser 1966: 190); a potential example is (3i), although such lines are extremely rare in *Parzival* and are invariably also candidates for elision (an alternative parsing of this line exists, namely *lébēnde wás ēr sáldēn rich*). Similarly, (3j) demonstrates that weakly stressed or reduced monosyllables (particularly clitic prepositions, articles and pronouns) are capable of occupying a single metrical position with a neighbouring

- (3) Sample of possible line structures in *Parzival*. Polysyllabic words are separated into syllables (word-internal syllable boundaries are represented by a full stop) and are marked for both ‘primary and secondary stress.

- a. 789,02 x / | x / | x / | x /
vnt .Fei. re. 'fi:z der ve:ch ge. 'ma:l
And Feirefiz of the dappled hue
- b. 827,21 x / | x / | x / | x / | [x]
der 'se:. le dvrch [de]s 'li:. bes 'scvl. de
*Of the soul through the body's guilt**
- c. 789,09 [x] x / | x / | x / | x /
dar si sich von 'sprvn. ge 'hv. ben ê
To where they had leapt forth from before
- d. 797,25 x / | x / | x / | x /
'o. der¹⁶ wer weiz 'en. de 'si:. ner chraft
Or who knows the limits of His power?
- e. 403,17 x / | x / | x / | [x]
von 'di. s[e]s 'bŵ:. es 've. ste
*About this building's strength*¹⁷*
- f. 416,10 x / | x / | x / | x / | x /
Ga. ,li. ci: 'a:. ne vnt di von ,[P]vn. tvr. 'tôys
Galicians and those of Punturtoys
- g. 797,04 / | / | / | x /
der 'her. ,zo. ge kyo:t
*the Duke Kyor**
- h. 805,01 x / | x / | x / | x /
[D]iu 'mag. tṽm. ,li:. ch[e] 'min. ne im gap
Who had given maidenly love to him
- i. 159,08 / x | x / | x / | x /
'le. ben. de was er 'sæl. den ri:ch
in life he was favoured by fortune
- j. 159,11 / | x / | x / | /
bra:ht ez der 'wi:. se ,Clin. 'scor
*the wise Clinschor brought it**

syllable, in line with Condition II. Inverted feet are not possible in trochaic metre and the frequency of lines beginning with a weak beat, such as (3a–f) and (3h), is a clear early indication of the fact that *Parzival* is in fact an iambic text.^{16,17}

The above principles of iambic tetrameter perfectly capture *Parzival*'s metre and, as will be shown, this analysis is much better supported by the linguistic evidence than one relying on the *Viertakter*. In addition to its division into sixteen books, *Parzival* is by convention additionally subdivided into 827 30-line sections. For the present analysis, five of these sections each were randomly selected from Books II, VIII and XVI in order to exclude the possibility of Wolfram's practice changing throughout the composition.¹⁸ These 450 lines were then parsed into alternating strong and weak beats in line with Principle III, according to the words' structure, grammatical function and their arrangement within the line (adapted from Zonneveld's 2000b approach to *Lutgart*). By preference, all monosyllabic content words bear stress, words with only one full vowel bear stress on that vowel and those with more than one full vowel bear stress on the root syllable if native, with alternating secondary stress (as described in MHG grammars, cf. Paul 1975). Schwa syllables, inflexional suffixes and unstressed prefixes cannot bear stress, and rhyming syllables obligatorily bear stress. Having thus scanned the lines, they were grouped according to their structure and analysed according to the adapted principles of Halle & Keyser (1966) to determine the metre of the poem. Having established the poem's conformity to iambic principles, additional evidence was drawn from the weight of the final, penultimate and antepenultimate syllables and those syllables constituting the first foot of each line, in order further to motivate the analysis of an iambic poetic foot structure, contrasting with the language's trochaic prosodic structure.

(4) Examples of lines categorised as (a) iambic, (b) trochaic, (c) type A, (d) type B or (e) type C.

- a. 818,09 x / x / x / x /
 al 'mi:. ne 'go. te sint ver. 'chorn
 All my gods are renounced!
- b. 71,13 / x / x / x / x
 bi: der naht ein 'qvec. hes 'fi. wer
 *A lively fire in the night**
- c. 789,03 x / x / x / x / x
 mit 'fr̥. den̥ v̥f̥ ,Mvn. sal. 'væ:. sce 'ri. ten
 Rode joyously up to Munsalvæsche
- d. 409,05 x / x / x / x
 div 'kv. ne. ,gin. ne 'ri:c. he
 The mighty queen
- e. 818,15 / x / x / x /
 do: der 'hei. den̥ t̥of̥ en. 'pfiench
 When the heathen had received baptism

¹⁶ Elision is also assumed to be possible in words which existed in a monosyllabic or schwa-final variant, as with ⟨od, ode⟩ /od, o.də/ (< OHG *odo*) besides ⟨oder⟩ /o.dər/ ('or'), or ⟨künc⟩ /kyng/ besides ⟨künc, künic⟩ /ky.neg/ ('king').

¹⁷ Translations marked with an asterisk (*) are my own, otherwise all translated text is taken from Cyril Edward's English translation (Wolfram von Eschenbach [c.1210]/2006).

¹⁸ These 30-line sections were: Book II 60, 66, 71, 77 and 82; Book VIII 403, 409, 416, 425 and 430; and Book XVI 789, 797, 805, 818 and 827.

TABLE 2. The number of lines categorised as iambic, trochaic, type A, type B, type C and ‘other’.

	Iambic	Trochaic	A	B	C	Other
Book II	67	9	4	29	17	24
Book VIII	56	15	5	31	25	18
Book XVI	73	10	7	17	26	17
Total	196	34	16	77	68	59
%	43.6	7.6	3.6	17.1	15.1	13.1

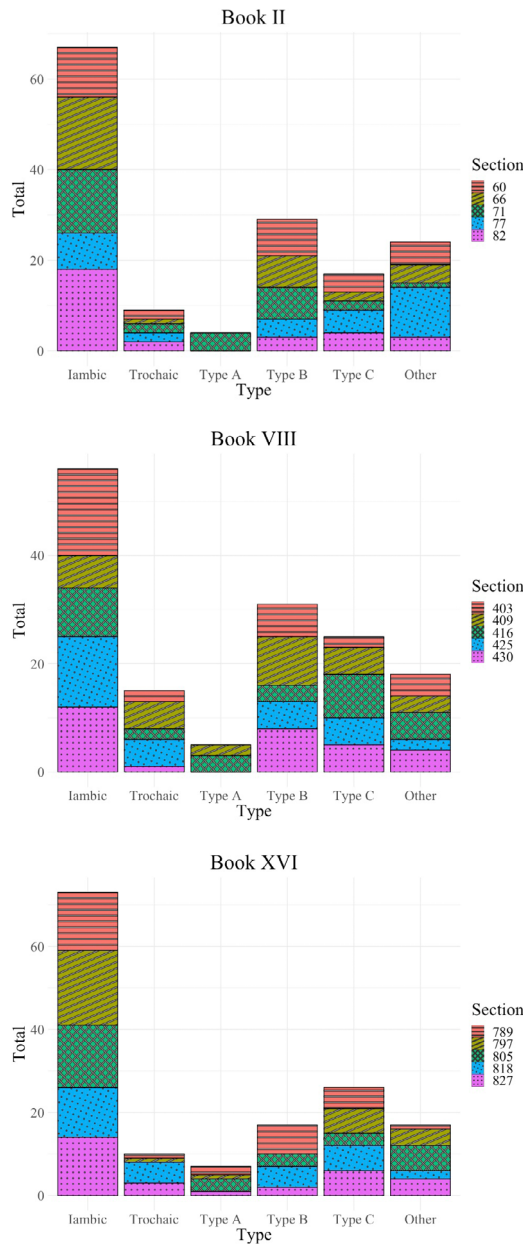


FIGURE 3. Distribution of line types in Books II, VIII and XVI. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-9868.12257)]

If one takes Halle & Keyser’s strict iambic principles, ignoring their ‘allowable deviations’ (1966: 190), then a line of iambic tetrameter should have the structure $x / | x / | x / | x /$, contrasting with the canonically trochaic $/ x | / x | / x | / x$ structure. In the selection, 196 lines are canonically iambic and 34 canonically trochaic, with the remaining lines deviating in some way from these ideals. The extreme imbalance between the distributions of these two patterns (43.6% vs. 7.6%) strongly indicates an iambic structure. Setting aside 59 less-regular lines (which all result from the ‘allowable deviations’ permitting empty weak positions), the remaining 51 lines follow one of three regular patterns: type A ($x / x / x / x /$), type B ($x / x / x / x$) or type C ($/ x / x / x /$). These patterns are all alternating, but ambiguous as to whether they are iambic or trochaic, as they involve a deleted or additional weak position (type B is the same as type A, but one foot shorter). An example of each line type is provided in (4), with their distribution presented in Table 2 and Figure 3:

In lines of type A and B, the initial syllable suggests an iamb but the final two syllables suggest a trochee, whereas the reverse is the case in lines of type C. Regardless of how they are analysed, they maintain an alternating pattern of strong and weak beats, and the uneven number of syllables requires that (i) some stressed syllables constitute a foot on their own and that (ii) an unstressed beat may be unfooted at one end of a line (or possibly elided). Both of these situations are perfectly permissible for an iamb according to Principles I and II. Given the preponderance of iambic lines elsewhere in the selection, it seems reasonable to treat lines of type C as iambic with the first syllable constituting an entire iambic foot. This is perfectly possible for an iamb, although a binary foot is preferred if possible, and the poet’s use of monosyllabic feet elsewhere in the poem is well-attested (termed *beschwerte Hebung*), often used stylistically to stress particular words, especially the first occurrence of names; it is in any case impossible to scan lines such as 1.187,21 (the tetrasyllabic name, *Condwiramurs*) as anything other than four monosyllabic feet and still retain four strong beats:

(5) 187,21 / | / | / | /
 Cond. wí:r. a:. mv:rs

Allowing for this structure, uncontroversial in the literature and consistent with Hayes’s (1995) taxonomy of metrical feet (which allows an iamb to form a monosyllabic foot if heavy), one can easily parse lines of type C as iambic. The line would consequently simply begin with a monosyllabic iambic foot: $/ | x / | x / | x /$. This would have the effect of increasing the number of iambic lines to 264 (59% of the selection). Combined with the relative scarcity of simple, alternating trochaic lines and evidence based on the weight of the final two syllables of each line, discussed below, treating such lines as trochaic seems counter to the data; it requires recourse to a much more complex and less parsimonious metrical structure, whereas an iambic analysis captures the data with reference only to structures unambiguously attested elsewhere in the text.

As lines of type A and B require a weak syllable at one end of the line to be outside the foot structure, one therefore has to determine which edge to make extrametrical. Given the mounting evidence in favour of an iambic analysis, the final syllable seems more likely. Justification for this solution and indeed the strongest evidence in favour of an iambic metre is to be found in the last two syllables of each line. In every case of type A or B, the line ends in a feminine rhyme. Principle I allows the addition of extrametrical final syllables to create such rhymes and the fact that there is no example in the selection of a line ending with a weak beat and a masculine rhyme is strong evidence in favour of the present analysis. This would therefore mean that the lines should be analysed as $x / | x / | x / | x / | [x]$ and $x / | x / | x / | [x]$ respectively, which would raise the number of iambic lines to 357 (79.3%). Of the remaining ‘other’ lines, most necessitate the use of at least one monosyllabic foot, as they contain fewer

than eight syllables, such as 1.797,04 and 1.805,11. Both are identical (*der herzoge Kyôt*; ‘the Duke Kyôt’) and contain five syllables, having to be scanned / 1 / 1 / 1 x / (the only schwa syllable has to occupy the sole weak beat available). All such lines can be scanned as iambic lines (whether canonical or of type A, B or C) with multiple monosyllabic feet, except for lines such as (6), problematic given their length, which must be scanned with elided unstressed syllables in order to avoid inappropriately stressed syllables or becoming overlong in terms of feet:

- (6) 805,13 x / | x / | x / | x / | [x]
 des 'kv. nec ,kar. 'dey. zes 'ma. g[e]t. ,zo. ge
 King Kardeiz's tutor

An analysis of the poem as trochaic does not fit the data, firstly due to the small proportion of lines which can be described as canonically trochaic, but also due to the fact that, even allowing the deletion of a final weak syllable to produce a masculine rhyme, the lines which follow the ideal iambic pattern would also require the addition of an extrametrical weak syllable at the start of the line. Indeed, lines which have been analysed as iambic with an initial extrametrical weak syllable (therefore beginning with two weak beats) would be disallowed by the first of Lahiri & Sytsema's adapted principles for trochaic tetrameter: ‘trochaic tetrameter verse consists of eight positions to which may be appended one initial extrametrical syllable’ (2018: 8). Given that line-initial foot reversal is disallowed in trochaic metre, it is difficult to see how lines such as (3i) are to be parsed as trochaic. How, then, are the 34 apparently trochaic lines in the selection to be understood? Given the iambic metre used elsewhere, two possibilities exist: either the lines are indeed iambic, beginning with a single heavy monosyllabic foot and ending with a feminine rhyme (and therefore an extrametrical syllable), grouped as / 1 x / 1 x / 1 x / 1 [x]; or these lines represent cases where the poet admits defeat and is unable to reconcile the trochaic feet of the language with the iambic feet he is trying to construct in the poem, constituting a small minority of truly trochaic lines, deviating from the metre governing the rest of the poem. As Halle & Keyser note, ‘there are lines [...] which must be deemed unmetrical’ (1966: 214). When the poet is attempting to force a language with stress on the left branch of a foot into a metre with stress on the right, this will in some cases simply not be possible, meaning that the poet will either have to employ the monosyllabic iamb or settle for an exceptional trochaic line.

3.2. The quantity of line-final syllables

In addition to the above analysis, further evidence for an iambic metre comes from a consideration of the final, penultimate and antepenultimate syllables of each line. If the metre were trochaic, one would expect to find lines ending with light or schwa syllables dominating the poem; if a line ended in a heavy syllable, it would be unlikely to be trochaic, as it would mean ending on a stressed syllable. A bias towards line-final heavy and superheavy syllables is far more indicative of iambic metre, and indeed this is what we find in *Parzival*, as can be seen in Table 3. In the selection, 206 lines end with a stress-attracting superheavy syllable, 100 end

TABLE 3. The number of lines in the selection ending with a $\bar{\sigma}$, σ or α .

	$\bar{\sigma}$	σ	α
Book II	82	20	48
Book VIII	55	37	58
Book XVI	69	43	38
Total	206	100	144
%	46	22	32

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candidate. This can be seen in the orthography of the text itself, where such elisions are sometimes even reflected in the spelling, as with the forms *geschehn* (Cl-MHG ⟨*geschehen*⟩ ‘happen PST.PTCP’: 1.827,29) and *jehn* (Cl-MHG ⟨*jehen*⟩, ‘attribute INF’: 1.827,30). As Jones & Jones put it: ‘While scribes, concentrating on written forms, may not have been sensitive to the need for elision, we may assume that performers of texts will have made the necessary adjustment automatically’ (2019: 232).

3.3. Summary

Given the striking tendency in the poem towards iambic metrical patterns, with around half of the lines unambiguously constituting an ideal iamb, one would require highly convincing evidence to justify treating these as irregularities in an otherwise trochaic metre. Indeed, such an analysis of the poem is contrary to the linguistic evidence, with only 34 lines written in what could be convincingly argued as a trochaic metre. These ‘trochaic’ lines can also be treated as iambic, exploiting Halle & Keyser’s (1966) principles for metrical analysis, but even if one continues to allow them as irregularities, their comparative rarity in the text speaks to the poet’s intent to write iambic verse; deviations from perfect iambic metre result from the occasional impossibility of reconciling iambic and trochaic structures. Indeed, the poet’s occasional deviations from strict tetrameter speak to his willingness to compromise on strict adherence to metre where necessary. The remaining lines can be neatly described as iambic by allowing an extrametrical syllable—either an unstressed, line-initial function word (in so-called ‘headless’ lines) or a line-final schwa syllable (to create a feminine rhyme)—and the use of heavy syllables as monosyllabic iambic feet. With lines of as little as four syllables existing in the poem, it is in any case necessary to allow empty weak positions in the line. In the present selection, these fall most commonly at the beginning of a line. Simply building iambic feet from left-to-right, allowing Halle Keyser’s conservative permissible deviations thus captures the picture remarkably neatly and removes the need for a complex repertoire of rhyme structures and additional constituents, such as the cadence and optional anacrusis. An iambic analysis neatly captures the common prosodic generalisations observable across the poem in a way that the *Viertakter* is unable to do.

The iambic metre of *Parzival* is thus apparently in conflict with the trochaic feet of the natural language outlined in Section 2.1: how does one reconcile initial stress with a poetic metre which ideally rhymes on line-final stressed syllables? The following section analyses the foot structure of final rhyming words and argues that Wolfram relied on words ending in monosyllabic (σ) feet or formed feminine rhymes from disyllabic feet ending with a schwa syllable. His total avoidance of words with (σσ) structure not only strengthens the iambic analysis outlined above, but also provides evidence for the continued salience of the resolved moraic trochee in MHG, which is first briefly explained in Section 4.1.

4. THE FOOT STRUCTURE OF RHYMING PAIRS

4.1. The Germanic foot

In Section 1, it was explained that stress in MHG was largely initial and that the language relied on weight-sensitive trochees, as in OHG. However, beyond this, the precise structure of the MHG foot was not elaborated upon. As this is of greater relevance for Section 4.2, it will be briefly outlined here. I assume in this analysis that MHG continued to exploit the Germanic Foot, a resolved, uneven moraic trochee of the form ([head] dependent), comprising an obligatory head and an optional dependent. The head of the foot must be *at least* bimoraic (even if this means comprising two syllables) but the dependent can *only* be

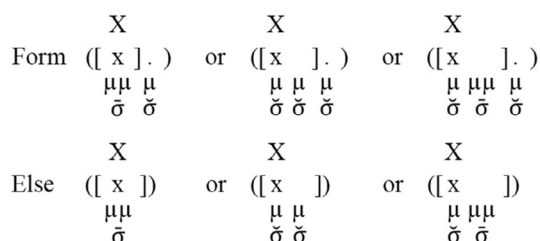


FIGURE 4. Possible structures of the Germanic Foot (adapted from Lahiri et al. 1999). The foot is enclosed in parentheses (.), with the strong branch indicated by *x* and the weak branch by a dot. The head is enclosed by square brackets [*x*]. Main stress is indicated by *X*.

monomoraic (i.e. a single -V syllable). The ideal foot thus has the branching structure ([ō]ō). The head of the foot can form a foot on its own, without a dependent, meaning that possible head structures are thus [ō], [ōō] or [ōō]. Drescher & Lahiri (1991) provide a thorough discussion of the issue, drawing on a range of evidence from early Germanic languages in support of this analysis, such as Sievers’s Law in Gothic or the syncope of medial unstressed high vowels in Old English and OHG¹⁹ (see also Lahiri et al. 1999; Lahiri 2001, 2015; Fikkert et al. 2006; Drescher & Lahiri 2022 for Germanic and Jacobs 2000 for Latin). The Germanic Foot can be represented as in Figure 4:

Examples of ([ōō]) words include *kūnec*/*kūnic* (‘king’), *herinc* (‘herring’) and *ahorn* (‘maple’) (/‘ky.neg, ‘he.ring, ‘a.horn/ > NHG [‘kø:.nɪç, ‘he:ɪ.ŋŋ, ‘ʔa:ɪ.hœn]). As the modern reflexes of these words demonstrate, German no longer tolerates resolved heads and all such words have undergone open syllable lengthening (OSL) in the transition from MHG to Early Modern German, resulting in words with the structure ([ō])([ō]). For the purposes of this article, as iambic tetrameter favours mono- or disyllabic feet, this essentially means that the foot structures potentially available to Wolfram were ([ō]), ([ō]ō), ([ōō]) (or ([ōō]ō) with elision) and ([ōō]), where square brackets enclose the head of the foot (the locus of stress). As will be shown in the following section, only the first three are compatible with iambic metre and Wolfram’s avoidance of ([ōō]) words line finally provides further support for the present iambic analysis, as well as the continued salience of the Germanic Foot.

4.2. Line-final feet

This section turns again to the structure of line-final rhyming words, considering the structure of line-final feet, which form the rhyme. For this analysis, four sections of the poem were randomly selected, all comprising seventeen 30-line sections, resulting in a sample of 2160 lines (roughly 11,500 words).²⁰ The results of a preliminary analysis of the structure of rhyming pairs are displayed graphically in Figure 5 (a full list of the data is provided in the Appendix). Unstressed prefixes, such as *ge-*, *be-* and *ver-* were ignored in these descriptions, as they are unable to bear stress and are, from a metrical perspective, effectively invisible (cf. Paul 2007). What is particularly remarkable here is the consistency of the proportion of rhymes made up by each structure across the four samples: each contains around 300 (ō) words (e.g. *not* ‘need, peril’), followed by an average of 118 (ōā) words (e.g. *brahte* ‘bring

¹⁹ Drescher & Lahiri (1991) argue that this process of High Vowel Deletion served to improve metrical structures. Compare, for example, OHG *lerta* < **lēr-i-ta* (‘teach 3SG.PRET’), as opposed to *werita* (‘tell 3SG.PRET’). In the former case, deletion results in the structure ([μμ] μ) rather than the less optimal ([μμ] μ) μ, whilst the latter already forms an exhaustive resolved moraic trochee ([μμ] μ) and deletion would result in the less preferred ([μμ]) (cf. Lahiri et al. 1999).

²⁰ These sections were ll.19,01–36,30; 361,01–378,30; 602,01–619,30 and 701,01–718,30, taken from Books I, VII, XI and XIV respectively.

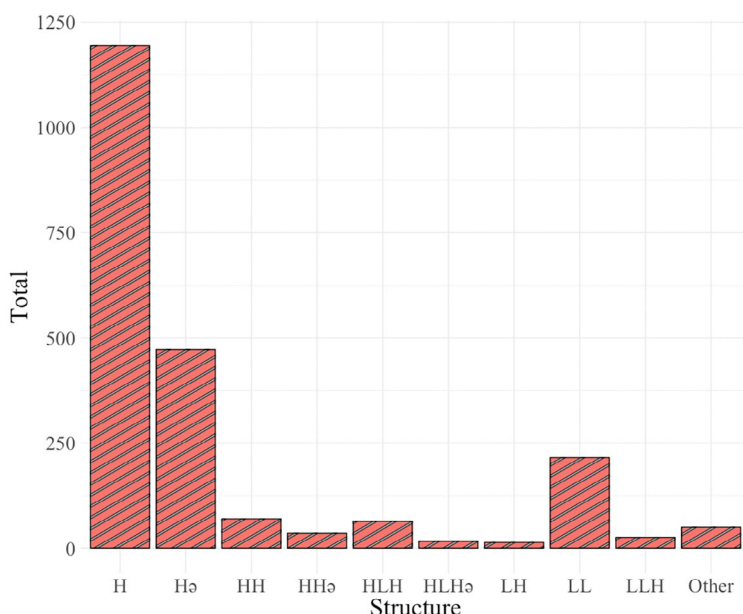


FIGURE 5. Total number of rhyming words of each syllable structure. [Colour figure can be viewed at [wileyonlinelibrary.com](https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/1467-968X.12257)]²¹

3SG.PRET', *chranze* 'garland DAT.M.SG'). The third most frequent structure is (ǫǫ), exclusively (ǫǫə), with an average of 54 (e.g. *losen* 'listen INF', *sīte* 'custom'). Also relatively common are (ǫǫǫə) and (ǫǫǫǫ) (e.g. *arbeiten* 'strive, endeavour INF', *herzogin* 'duchess'). By separating these words into feet and comparing these to the ideal line structure, it is possible to draw conclusions about permissible and impermissible rhyme structures, further strengthening the argument presented in Sections 3.1 and 3.2.

According to the iambic analysis, one would expect rhymes to be formed on final monosyllabic ([ǫ]) feet, or in the case of the less-favoured feminine rhymes, ([ǫǫə) and ([ǫǫǫ]) feet. Due to the weakening of vowels in unstressed syllables which occurred between OHG and MHG, the second syllable of all (ǫǫ) words would be a schwa syllable (unlike OHG, which featured both long and short full vowels in unstressed syllables, cf. MHG *rehte* 'straightness, justice', *zunge* 'tongue' < OHG *rehtī*, *zunga*). In contrast, disyllabic feet with initial stress which do not end in a schwa syllable would not be permissible in rhyme position, as they conflict with the iambic metre (due to their prominence on the first, rather than their second syllable) and would not be able to form a feminine rhyme. As vowels in unstressed final syllables were reduced and (ǫǫ) sequences formed two monosyllabic ([ǫ]) feet, this leaves only words of ([ǫǫ]) structure, e.g. *kranēch* /'kra.nex/ ('crane'; NHG *Kranich* ['kʁaː.nɪç]).

What is immediately apparent from Figure 5 is that the three most common word structures are in fact single feet. Crucially, these feet are the three possibilities predicted by an iambic analysis: ([ǫ]), ([ǫǫə) and ([ǫǫǫ]), whilst words of ([ǫǫǫ]) structure are far less common (and, as will be shown, are not true examples of ([ǫǫǫ]) feet). Longer words comprise multiple feet; (ǫǫ) words rhyme on the second of two consecutive monosyllabic ([ǫ]) feet and (ǫǫǫ) words rhyme a final monosyllabic ([ǫ]) foot, preceded by a ([ǫǫǫ]) foot. Table 4 presents the distribution of foot structures when the final foot is parsed out of each rhyme, with examples of such lines provided in (8). (ǫǫ) words might initially seem to be more problematic. However, in line with Principle II in (2), not all weak positions need be occupied and

²¹The sixteen structures appearing fewer than ten times each were grouped as 'other'.

TABLE 4. Frequency of different foot structures in rhyming position.

Final Foot	Count	Percentage
([ō])	1378	64
([ō]ə)	537	25
([ōō])	229	11
([ōō])	16	<1

successive monosyllabic feet are possible; in all but eleven cases of ([ō])([ō])-final lines, both syllables occupy a stressed position (e.g. 1.703,24: *ēin stár.chēz spér vōn An.grám*; ‘a sturdy spear from Angram’). Indeed, in (8d), only one syllable does not carry a strong beat. However, in a number of cases, it is also apparently possible to defoot a heavy syllable immediately preceding another heavy syllable and have it occupy a weak beat, provided it forms the head of a foot (unlike the *ō* in a resolved ([ōō]) foot). This can be seen in (8e) (for a discussion of the same phenomenon in MNL verse, see Sytsema & Lahiri 2018; Fikkert 2000).²²

(8) Possible final foot structures.

- a. ([ō]): 363,14 x / | x / | x / | x /
 ([ō])([ō] ǒ) ([ō])([ō])([ō] ǒ) ([ō])([ō] ǒ) ([ō])([ō] ǒ)
 ich ‘ri:. te dem ‘trvg. ‘næ:. re na:ch
*I am riding after the swindler**
- b. ([ō]ǒ): 27,07 / | x / | x / | x / | [x]
 ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ)
 ‘mi:. ne ‘go. te vnt ǒch die ‘si:. ne
My gods, and his gods, too
- c. ([ō]ǒ)([ō]): 376,14 x / | x / | x / | x /
 (ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ)
 ze²² ‘or. se v̆z dri: ‘bar. be ‘ga:n
Three barbicans for mounted sorties
- d. ([ō])([ō]): 707,05 / | / | x / | /
 ([ō])([ō])([ō])([ō])([ō])([ō])
 ‘Ar. ‘tv:s vnt ‘Ga:. ‘wa:n
*Arthur and Gawain**
- e. ([ō])([ō]): 702,06 / | x / | x / | x /
 ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ)
 ‘ma.nē. gen ‘tiw̆. ern chopf ‘gvl. ‘di:n
*Many a precious golden cup**
- f. ([ōō]): 710,20 x / | x / | x / | x / | [x]
 ([ō])([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ) ([ō] ǒ)
 di: ‘ma. get ‘fv̆r. ten ‘sv̆n. der ‘da. ne
[Her mother and grandmother] led the maiden apart

²² *ze* (‘to’) is an unstressed function word and therefore exempt from the bimoraic minimal word requirement. Here it would likely be cliticised to a neighbouring prosodic word. When focused, it surfaces as *zuo*, capable of forming a prosodic word, due to its long, full vowel (and therefore two morae).

What we find, therefore, is that Wolfram is essentially rhyming on the head of the final foot, with any line-final (schwa) syllables being extrametrical (for the purposes of metre, not prosodically extrametrical). In this way, (θə) words are therefore metrically equivalent to a single heavy syllable (in terms of poetic metre) and words ending with a ([θ]) or ([θə]) foot comprise 89% of all rhymes. Similarly, ([θə]) feet are capable of forming a feminine rhyme on the first stressed syllable, compatible with iambic metre. Notably, there are no ([θ]θ) or ([θθ]) words where the final θ is not a schwa syllable and the vast majority of ([θə]) words comprises inflected verbs, such as *sagen* ('say INF') and *chlage* ('lament 1SG.PRES'), but also occasional adverbs, as in (8g). Examples of ([θ]θ) words are typically plural nouns, adverbs, inflected adjectives or verbs with heavy stems, even after suffixation, such as *ogen* ('eyes'), *vmbe* ('about, around'), *riche* ('mighty'), *strîten* ('fight INF') and *genîtet* ('enjoy PST.PTCP'). Line-final schwas are frequently even orthographically elided in Cod. 857, e.g. *sagn:tragn*, *gegebn:lebn* and *ab:hab* (CI-MHG ⟨sagen:tragen⟩ ('say INF': 'wear INF') ll.22,19:20; ⟨gegeben:leben⟩ ('give PST.PTCP': 'life') 29,15:16 and ⟨abe:habe⟩ ('from': 'possessions') 31,21:22), effectively producing a final (θ):

- (9) a. 366,07 x / | x / | x / | x /
 Do: sp[ra]ch er 'he:r. re 'iw. er chvmn
 He said: 'Lord, your arrival
- b. 366,08 x / | x / | x / | x /
 daz mach mit 'sæ:l. den vns ge. 'frvmn
 may bring us profit in bliss

More interesting are words of ([θθ]) structure, such as MHG *habech/habich* /'ha.bex/ (< OHG *habuh*; cf. NHG *Habicht* ['ha:biçt] 'hawk'). Although (θθ) sequences form the ideal foot in iambic languages, in a language with a resolved moraic trochee, like MHG, stress fell on the initial syllable (provided it is not one of the aforementioned unstressed prefixes) and the final, heavy syllable would be unstressed. However, the heavy syllable crucially forms part of the head of the foot and not the dependent or a separate foot. It thus cannot be defooted, unlike one of two consecutive monosyllabic feet (the light syllable is unable to form the head of a foot alone). Nor can this syllable be poetically extrametrical (like the feminine rhymes), as it is heavy. Due to this, natural stress would be fundamentally opposed to the required poetic stress pattern, as an unstressed syllable would be forced to form the rhyme. ([θθ]) feet are thus incompatible with iambic metre, whereas it would be perfectly acceptable to have a final unstressed heavy syllable occupy the last weak beat in trochaic metre. A poet choosing to compose a poem in iambic metre would thus be forced to avoid line-final ([θθ]) feet. However, if the metre were trochaic, (θθ) words would be expected to occur just as frequently in line-final position as they do line-medially. As Table 4 demonstrates, this is clearly not the case; less than 1% of rhymes are (θθ) words. In fact, the situation is even more striking, as in all 2160 lines, there is not a single example of a native word in this position.²³ For example, the word *küeneck/küinic* ('king') occurs 351 times throughout the poem, but never once in line-final position (cf. Hall 1990).

²³ The words *ivgent* (< OHG *tugend*, *tuginde*; NHG *Tugend* ['tu:gʏnt] 'virtue') and *ivgent* (< OHG *jugund*, *jugend*; NHG *Jugend* ['ju:gʏnt] 'youth') are the only possible native candidates. However, their spelling reflects the fact that the formerly full vowels of the OHG suffix have already been dramatically reduced, as in *ivgent* (l.139,25 of Cod. 857). Furthermore, elsewhere in the poem, the second syllable is elided line medially, as in 'sô mánegē tūgent diu gótes kráft' (l.559,06: 'so many a virtue God's might'). This suggests that it is in fact treated as a light syllable with a syllabic nasal, available for elision (if not even a monosyllable), enabling the rhyme seen in ll.613,09:10.

The sixteen examples of (ǫ̃ǫ) words in rhyme position are all Romance proper nouns or loan words, such as *rubin* /ru.'bi:n/ (‘ruby’; Cl-MHG *rubîn*). As mentioned in Section 2.1, such words were systematically borrowed with right-edge stress, invariably ending in a superheavy syllable (cf. Wiener 1895). In this way, they do not actually behave like native ([ǫ̃ǫ]) words and constitute a kind of get-out-of-jail-free card for the poet; if one is using a foreign metre, foreign words provide an easy solution. An example of this can be seen in (10):²⁴

- (10) a. (ǫ̃ǫ): 24,04 x / | x / | x / | x /
 ([ǫ̃]) ([ǫ̃] ǫ̃) ([ǫ̃]) ([ǫ̃]) ǫ̃ ([ǫ̃] ǫ̃) ǫ̃ ([ǫ̃])
 v̆f 'ei. nen kvl. 'ter ge. 'step. pet sa. 'mi:t²⁴
On a cushion piled with samite
- b. (ǫ̃ǫ): 23,15 / | x / | x / | x /
 ([ǫ̃]) ǫ̃ ([ǫ̃] ǫ̃) ([ǫ̃]) = ǫ̃ ǫ̃ ([ǫ̃])
 vnt er. 'bêiz. ten vor dem Pa. 'las
And dismounted before the great hall

We therefore have an explanation for why ([ǫ̃ǫ]) words only appear line-internally, never finally. It is only in Romance loan words with non-native final stress that (ǫ̃ǫ) words are tolerated. This total avoidance speaks to the continued salience of this structure as the resolved head of a single foot, as well as the fact that Wolfram’s grammar predated OSL, a general sound change which lengthened all vowels in stressed open syllables (see Section 2.1), accounting for the difference between MHG *name*, *ahorn* /'na.mə, 'a.horn/ (‘name’, ‘maple’) and NHG *Name*, *Ahorn* ['na:.mə, 'ʔa:.hɔ̃n]. Had OSL been a part of Wolfram’s grammar, there would have been no reason to avoid the originally (ǫ̃ǫ) words, as they would all have become ([ǫ̃])([ǫ̃]) words, which would be perfectly acceptable at the end of a line in iambic tetrameter, as discussed above. (ǫ̃ǫ) words would thus be expected to occur just as frequently in line-final position as they do line-medially (and certainly no less frequently than the (ǫ̃ǫ) words inherited from OHG with which they would then pattern).

The evidence from metre demonstrates that Wolfram was highly sensitive to quantity and stress and took great care to adhere to his chosen iambic pentameter. His decision to compose iambic verse in a trochaic language engendered a number of difficulties in line-final position; if one’s language has largely initial stress, how does one produce a line with a stressed final rhyming syllable? The dominance of monosyllabic words line finally (64%) clearly demonstrates Wolfram’s usual solution. Failing this, he falls back on a feminine rhyme or even ‘cheats’ with a foreign loan word. In 89% of lines, the rhyme is formed on a heavy syllable and in the present selection, the poet never once rhymes a native ([ǫ̃ǫ]) word. This complete absence is strong evidence in favour of an iambic analysis and the continued salience of the Germanic Foot in Wolfram’s EFr (which was yet to undergo OSL), as it is the only word structure which is incompatible with iambic tetrameter.

5. CONCLUSIONS

This research has sought to clarify the precise nature of the metre of Wolfram von Eschenbach’s *Parzival*, a poem originally written in EFr dialect c.1210 and transmitted via

²⁴ In these examples, unbracketed ǫ̃ represents an unfooted light syllable, such as the unstressed verbal prefixes *ge-* and *er-* or encliticised definite article. It should be noted that *kulter* is also of Romance origin and therefore stressed on the final syllable, allowing the previous (ǫ̃) to be defooted. Similarly, *samit* is stressed on the final superheavy syllable and the initial light syllable can be considered degenerate.

Cod. 857, a Bavarian MS copied roughly fifty years later. In doing so, this paper challenges the traditional assumption in the literature of a preference for trochaic metre in poetry of the MHG Classical Period. This assumption, based on the fact that MHG, like OHG before it and NHG afterwards, is an undeniably trochaic language, has meant that *Parzival* has generally been regarded as an example of trochaic verse, the *Viertakter* outlined in Section 3.1. However, this paper demonstrates for the first time that this standard trochaic analysis is not only insufficient but counter to the linguistic evidence and that the patterns of alternation observable in *Parzival* are accounted for much more simply by an iambic analysis.

After a summary of the linguistic and literary context of the poem, focusing on MHG stress and the influence of French prestige models in Section 2, Section 3 began with a critical review of the traditional approach to poetry of the MHG Classical Period. This was followed by an analysis of a representative sample of the poem, identifying five key patterns of alternation, with ideal iambs dominating and ideal trochees being extremely rare. In line with the principles identified by Halle & Keyser (1966), it is argued that *Parzival* is in fact an example of disciplined iambic tetrameter. The dominance of the *wswsws* pattern, beginning on a weak beat and ending on a strong, offers convincing evidence in favour of iambic metre. In the selection, 44% of the lines were found to constitute unambiguous iambs, whilst only 8% were written in what could convincingly be argued to be trochaic metre. The remaining lines can be neatly categorised as iambic by allowing a line-final extrametrical syllable (creating a feminine rhyme) or the construction of monosyllabic iambic feet when the syllable is heavy (i.e. allowing weak positions to be unoccupied). With lines of as little as four syllables existing in the poem, it is in any case necessary to permit empty weak positions in the line. The iambic analysis accounts for the patterns of alternation much more parsimoniously, as a visual comparison of the two analyses of the dominant *wswsws* pattern illustrates. Compare, for instance, Figure 6 (the *Viertakter*) and Figure 7 (iambic tetrameter):

An iambic analysis is further corroborated by the large number of heavy and superheavy syllables terminating lines, the vast majority of which are immediately preceded by an unstressed

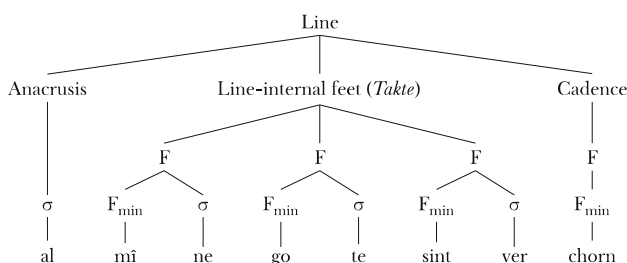


FIGURE 6. An arboreal representation of the traditional parsing of 1.1818,09: ‘All my gods are renounced!’.

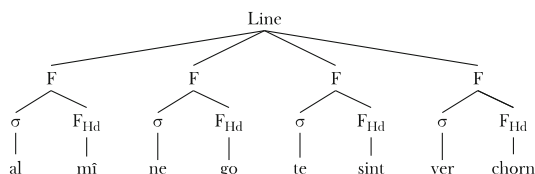


FIGURE 7. An arboreal representation of the proposed iambic parsing of 1.1818,09: ‘All my gods are renounced!’.

schwa syllable, thus forming a final iambic foot. A trochaic analysis would predict most final syllables to be light, but instead one finds the reverse: a marked preference for heavy, stressed syllables. Lines *always* end with either a final iamb or an iamb followed by an extrametrical schwa syllable (the feminine rhyme required under both analyses). Furthermore, initial syllables are usually weak, invariably function words, such as *unt* ('and'). When 69% of lines begin with a weak beat and 68% of lines end with an iambic foot (indeed every line, if one includes iambic feet followed by a schwa), an iambic analysis seems much more appropriate.

Attempting to write iambic verse in a trochaic language naturally results in tensions which will constrain the poet's verse. It is therefore possible, through careful analysis of the prosodic structure of rhyme words—as well as which words he conspicuously avoids rhyming—to provide further evidence not only of iambic metre, but also of the pertinacity of the Germanic Foot (a resolved, uneven trochee, cf. Drescher & Lahiri 1991). In iambic tetrameter, the final (poetic) foot of the line should rhyme on the head of the final (prosodic) foot of the word. Given the trochaic nature of the language, with largely initial stress, this limits him to certain prosodic structures. ([$\bar{\sigma}$]) is no obstacle and, allowing for feminine rhymes, nor are final feet of structures ([$\bar{\sigma}$ ə]) or ([$\check{\sigma}$ ə]), provided the first syllable occupies a stressed beat. Similarly, ([$\bar{\sigma}$]) ([$\bar{\sigma}$]) strings can be dealt with either by stressing both syllables or defooting the first to achieve the required alternation.

However, resolved ([$\check{\sigma}\bar{\sigma}$]) feet cannot form a feminine rhyme, due to the fact that the final syllable is heavy (albeit unstressed). In addition, this $\bar{\sigma}$ cannot be defooted, as this is only possible for entire feet. It does not form the head of a foot alone, but rather allows the preceding $\check{\sigma}$ to form a foot with a maximal head and initial stress. Prior to OSL, such structures should therefore be incompatible with iambic metre and are indeed avoided by Wolfram. The proportion of various line-final foot structures was remarkably consistent across the sample, with 89% of lines ending with a ([$\bar{\sigma}$]) or ([$\bar{\sigma}$ ə]) foot and 11% a ([$\check{\sigma}$ ə]) foot. ($\check{\sigma}\bar{\sigma}$) rhymes form less than 1% and are all Romance loan words borrowed with right-edge stress. The complete absence of ([$\check{\sigma}\bar{\sigma}$]) structures line finally (despite their appearance in other line positions) provides evidence for its continued salience as a prosodic unit. This furthermore supports an iambic account of *Parzival's* metre; if the verse were trochaic, it would be perfectly acceptable to have a final unstressed heavy syllable occupy the final weak beat. The tension between Wolfram's chosen iambic metre and the trochaic structure of MHG is thus most pronounced in line-final position, where the largely initial stress of the natural language is at odds with the desire for final stressed rhyming syllables. Wolfram's preferred solution—representing 64% of cases—appears to have been the use of monosyllabic ([$\bar{\sigma}$]) words, otherwise relying on feminine rhymes, longer ([$\bar{\sigma}$])—final words or even foreign loan words (with convenient right-edge stress).

It is thus the position of this paper that *Parzival* represents an early example of German poetry composed in alternating iambic metre, contrary to the traditional literary view. Given the trend elsewhere in Europe to emulate French lyrics and compose verse in iambic metre, even in trochaic languages, it seems inadequate to assume a trochaic metre in a work of MHG poetry without good evidence. No such evidence was found in this study, based on a quantitative analysis of linguistic evidence. Indeed, the evidence consistently supports an iambic interpretation. The present analysis has the advantage of explaining the peculiarities of scansion in *Parzival* much more parsimoniously than the traditional literary view, which relies on the overgeneralisation of a complex system involving a large amount of additional machinery and a questionable reliance on metrical stress which deviates from natural language. A simple iambic reading is perfectly adequate, with any apparent irregularities or deviations from an ideal iambic metre resulting from the occasional impossibility of reconciling iambic and trochaic structures; of attempting to write iambic verse in a trochaic language.

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APPENDIX A The total number of rhyming words of different syllable structures in the samples from Books I, VII, XI and XIV.

ō	324	ō	323	ō	277	ō	271
ōa	95	ōa	97	ōa	120	ōa	160
ōō	10	ōō	13	ōō	27	ōō	21
ōōa	8	ōōa	11	ōōa	12	ōōa	4
ōā	51	ōā	61	ōā	62	ōā	42
ōāa	0	ōāa	0	ōāa	4	ōāa	4
ōō	9	ōō	0	ōō	3	ōō	2
ōōa	2	ōōa	0	ōōa	0	ōōa	0
ōōā	0	ōōā	1	ōōā	1	ōōā	0
ōōōā	1	ōōōā	0	ōōōā	0	ōōōā	0
ōōō	15	ōōō	18	ōōō	14	ōōō	17
ōōōa	3	ōōōa	7	ōōōa	3	ōōōa	4
ōōōō	1	ōōōō	1	ōōōō	5	ōōōō	0
ōōōōa	0	ōōōōa	0	ōōōōa	2	ōōōōa	1
ōōōō	14	ōōōō	4	ōōōō	2	ōōōō	6
ōōōōa	2	ōōōōa	0	ōōōōa	0	ōōōōa	2
ōōōōō	2	ōōōōō	0	ōōōōō	3	ōōōōō	3
ōōōōā	1	ōōōōā	2	ōōōōā	1	ōōōōā	1
ōōōōōā	1	ōōōōōā	1	ōōōōōā	1	ōōōōōā	2
ōōōōōō	1	ōōōōōō	1	ōōōōōō	1		
				ōōōōōō	1		